Kurnool is one of the 23 districts of Andhra Pradesh and one of the four so-called Ceded Districts. Kurnool has a hoary antiquity. Archaeologically there are a number of megalithic and chalcolithic sites in the district which require to be studied. The Archaeology Department of Andhra Pradesh has noticed a good number of these sites. Historically speaking, this district had been under the hegemony of the Nandas and Mauryas of the north. The fact that Asokan edicts had spread over in the Anantapur district southward bears ample testimony to the fact that Mauryan rule had its grip over this region also. It is quite natural that as political successors to the Mauryas, the Satavahanas also had subjugated the southern region. We have epigraphical evidences aplenty which show that the Chalukyas of Badami, the Rashtrakutas and the later Chalukyas of Kalyani held suzerainty over this region. We do not have enough evidences to suggest that this area came under the rule of Kakatiyas. But, a number of Vijayanagara epigraphs amply show that the several
rulers of the different dynasties of Vijayanagara had brought this region also under their control. Thereafter, beyond the 16th century, it fell into the hands of the Mohammadan chiefs - the Nawabs of Kurnool district. Finally the British, through the East India Company, grabbed these areas. Much water has flown in the Tungabhadra and for a short period of three years from October, 1953 to 1956 it was the capital of the newly formed State of Andhra. 

Originally, Kurnool was known by the name Kandanavolu. It is possibly during the Muslim rule that it came to be called Kurnool. Kandena, in Telugu, is the name given to the thick black oil that was used to grease the wheels of the carts with. Tradition avers that when bullock carts were moving out of Kurnool towards Alampur crossing the Tungabhadra grease was applied to the wheels of the carts to mitigate the noise of the wheels of the moving carts.

Geographically the boundaries of Kurnool district are Mahaboobnagar in the north, Anantapur and Cuddapah districts towards south, the Karnataka State in the west and the Prakasam in the east.
There are three Revenue Divisions with Adoni and Nandyala as their headquarters. Originally there were 13 taluks and firkas, but in May, 1985 these were all reorganised into 25 Mandals. According to the 1991 census the total population of the district is 29,73,709. Other details of the 1991 census are not available. But, according to 1981 census the population was 2,40,729. Out of these the scheduled tribes account for 39,914 which is 1.66 % of the total population. The important tribes in the district are the Sugalis, the Yerukulas and the Chenchus. The Lambadies are found in 25 of the 54 Mandals and they live in their own groups viz., the thandas. Even the number of inhabitants of these thandas are not equally distributed, but varies from one thanda to the other. The total number of Lambadies or Sugalis in the district goes upto 30,000 and of them only 14 % among men is literate while, among women it is still low, only 6 %. Holagunda is one of the 54 Mandals and Nerniki thanda is situated in this. It is Nerniki thanda that forms the subject matter of our study. Nerniki is situated about 10 Kilometers from
Alur, the nearest town for these tribes for all administrative purposes. This Nerniki thanda comes under the village panchayat of Holagunda Mandal. To the north of Nerniki is Muddanageri, to the south hillocks, Karideguttem to the east and the village Nerniki to the west. Kottapeta is to the southwest.

There are 150 families of Lambadies in the Nerniki thanda. Loka Naik a grand old man of 93 years recollects that these families migrated to this area where they have been living since long, for more than 200 years. They are by profession agriculturists but their economy is below the average. They engage themselves in agricultural labour and also by collection of firewood which they sell in the nearby town. They could be labelled as 'pastoral tribe'.

We have referred to the three tribes the Chenchus, Yerukulas and Lambadies. Interestingly, the first tribe is economically backward as compared to the Lambadies. It may be noted that these people are kept out of the pale of the more civilized and cultured society. The Lambadies attract the society
more because of their colourful dress and as colourful life. Their social groupings, customs and behaviour are perhaps the reason for their segregation. But the Lambadies themselves are attracted by the life style of modern societies in the nearby towns and urban centres. Their avocation like the selling of firewood, cowries, glass beads etc., send them often to the towns, where urbanisation engulfs them. When the urban society keeps them out they go to them shedding off their own life styles and adjusting themselves to the new situation by adopting modern ways of civilization. But this urbanisation is mostly limited to the men folk, since the women due to her own family chores do not find enough time to get themselves urbanised. Besides, assisting the men-folk in gathering firewood and other markettable things, like honey, they have to cook food and rare up the family. They do go to the towns but do not find themselves inclined towards reshaping their life styles. The men-folk almost invariably return to their thandas in the nights. But by then they would have spent a good number of hours of the day with the urbanites
falling themselves a prey to the urban culture. This would show that between the men-folk and the women the latter are hard working and spent much of their time in the thanda and assist the men-folk in earning the livelihood. Being lazy, the men, on the other hand, once having gone to the town in the day, spend their time leisurely and lazily and succumb easily to the attractions of the town/city. Of course, one noteworthy factor is the distance between these thandas and urban centres. Nearer the latter, greater the attraction.

If the Chenchus have been less attracted to the modernising effect, it is because they live deep in the forest keeping busy to earn their livelihood. It becomes difficult for them to shed their traditional and primitive lives and become a prey to modernity. Almost similar is the case with the Yerukulas who have to collect beads and weave baskets for sale in towns. They also practice the profession of sooth-saying.

With regard to the Banjaras vis-a-vis the
Lambadies, there are certain differences noticed. For example, Rev. J. Gain to whom Thurston refers, says that Sugalis do not travel in such large companies as the Banjaras, nor their women so gaudily dressed as the latter. There is but little friendship between these two classes. Sugalis regarding it as anything but an honour to be called a Banjari while the latter are not fluttered with the name Sugali.

The aim of the present dissertation is to make a fairly in-depth study of the Lambadies with regard to their internal political organisation which is tradition-oriented, their social and economic life-patterns, religious beliefs and customs. Great efforts are made by the Government through several of its schemes to uplift these illiterate impoverished and backward tribes and to bring them to the main stream of social order, of course without disturbing their past traditions and customs which have enriched the folk culture, arts, literature and so on. It is proposed to give an account of their pattern of life and examine the several schemes which are meant for their well
being. It has to be examined whether these schemes of the Government are adequate and more important whether they actually reach these people. It is also worthwhile to examine how far these have helped these tribes in bringing about a change in them as envisaged.

In scope, the present study is confined to a small group of Lambadies in the Kurnool district, specially belonging to a particular thanda - Nārnikī thanda - one of the several thandas of these Lambadies spread over the district. It is interesting to note that each of these thandas have their own political organisations with a hierarchy which spells out the duties of the members of thanda, specially with regard to their social order and which has power strong enough to deal with indisciplines, irregularities etc., by meting out proper justice that is binding upon the society. These are unofficial organisations and have no official sanction, but these are supreme and binding. Beginning of such a study is made in this dissertation almost as a prelude to wider studies. We are aware that similar studies have been
undertaken by young scholars of different Universities and also researchers of the Anthropological Survey of India. In fact, the Governmental body is engaged not merely in a survey of such a tribe but also in studying these societies. It is unfortunate that the results of such studies are not published in book form. There are a number of research papers published in several journals, but they are inadequate.

What has been stated above becomes a statement relating to the source materials. In fact, we have very few primary source materials available for study. The constitutional safeguards and several amendments brought to the constitution could be taken as primary, documentary source materials which help us in our study. Likewise are the reports by several Commissions set up to examine the problems of these tribes and suggest remedial measures. But oftentimes these reports become opinionated. Facts and interpretations get mixed up. To that extent they lose their primary character. Yet, they could be made use of after sifting the material.
The documentary evidences, primary or secondary do not help in the understanding of the people. To that extent seeing is better than believing. The documents do not exactly delineate the lives of these several groups. Hence, in such studies participant observation becomes a very essential source material. But it is not so easy as said. The tribal people are suspicious of outsiders taking interest in them. One has to be first accepted by them which means that mutual confidence is to be developed between them. Only when they become convinced that the outsider is not harmful, but, on the other hand, is friendly and helpful and only has academic interest that they open out and bestow confidence. Of late, in the sociological and anthropological studies such participant observation is considered as essential and they are considered as sources. Still, since the conclusions drawn out do contain, naturally indeed, one's own interpretation also, they can be considered as secondary source materials.

There is yet another method of culling out information through interviews. Hence, we make use
of modern scientific technology of recording the statements through tape to preserve such interviews as recorded evidences. Here we interviewed not only those belonging to the thandas but also such of those who have associated themselves with such people in some way or the other. They might be officials of the Tribal Welfare department, individuals involved in social service connected with these tribes or even the tribal people themselves.

In the present study we have made use of all such primary sources. We could fortunately lay our hands upon such books and journals. Most prominent and probably the earliest of such studies is Edger Thurston's "Castes and Tribes of Southern India (Vol. IV). Recently, Dr. Halbar of the Karnataka University has brought out the result of his study in the form of a book "Lamani Economy and Society in Change". Sri K. Mohan Rao, Director of Tribal Cultural Research and Training Institute has published a series of articles on Lambadies of Andhra Pradesh. We have "The Tribes and Castes of
Madras Presidency" by M.A. Sheering; "Banjaras and their Festivals" in Telugu by A. Joseph in "Tribal". Mention may be made of "The Castes and Tribes of H.E.H. the Nizams dominion" by Syed Siraj-ul-Hasan.

In the present study we have made use of these primary sources. We had access also to published materials in the form of books, journals, etc. For example, we have Dr. Halbar's book mentioned above. Besides, a number of published papers in various journals. We may cite a few examples like:


7. "Additional financial requirements for Banjara Development in sub-plan areas of Andhra Pradesh" by Social Welfare Department.